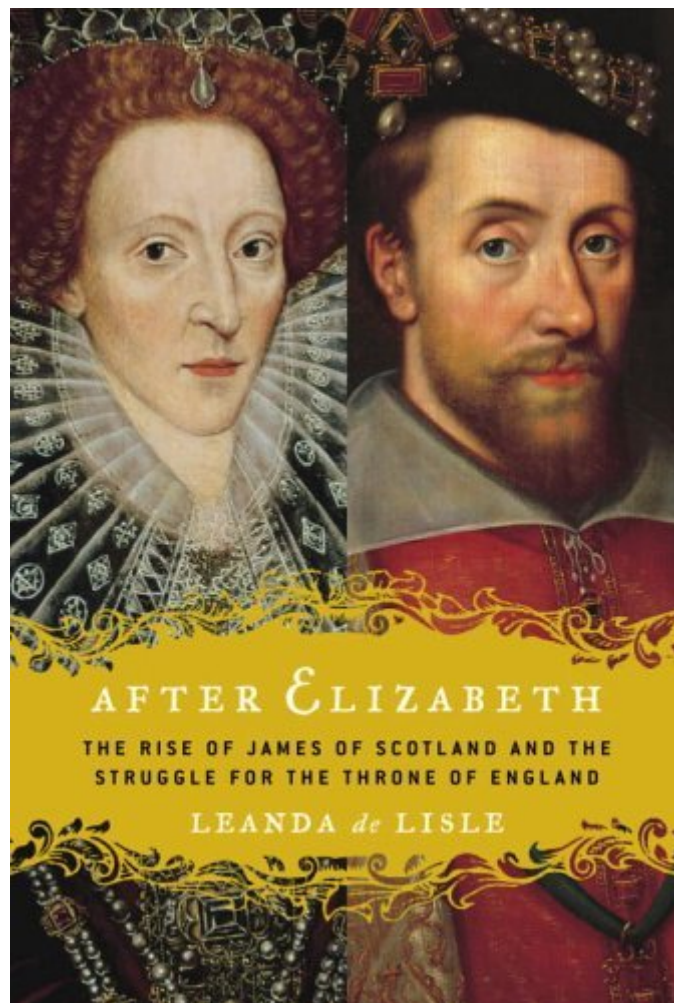


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After Elizabeth: The Rise Of James Of Scotland And The Struggle For The Throne Of England



Synopsis

Many volumes have been written about the long reign of Elizabeth I. Now, for the first time, comes a brilliant new work that focuses on the critical year her reign ended, a time in which England lost its childless queen and a Machiavellian struggle ensued to find her successor. December 1602. After forty-four years on the throne, Queen Elizabeth is in decline. The formidable ruler whose motto is *Semper eadem* (I never change) has become a dithering old woman, missing teeth and wearing makeup half an inch thick. The kingdom has been weakened by the cost of war with Spain and the simmering discontent of both the rich and the poor. The stage has been set, at long last, for succession. But the Queen who famously never married has no heir. Elizabeth's senior relative is James VI of Scotland, Protestant son of Elizabeth's cousin Mary Queen of Scots. But as a foreigner and a Stuart, he is excluded from the throne under English law. The road to and beyond his coronation will be filled with conspiracy and duplicity, personal betrayals and political upheavals. Bringing history to thrilling life, Leanda de Lisle captures the time, place, and players as never before. As the Queen nears the end, we witness the scheming of her courtiers for the candidates of their choice; blood-soaked infighting among the Catholic clergy as they struggle to survive in the face of persecution; the widespread fear that civil war, invasion, or revolution will follow the monarch's death; and the signs, portents, and ghosts that seem to mark her end. Here, too, are the surprising and, to some, dismaying results of James's ascension: his continuation of Elizabeth's persecution of Catholics, his desire to unite his two kingdoms into a new country called Britain, and the painful contrast between the pomp and finery of Elizabeth's court and the begrimed quality of his own. Around the old queen and the new king, swirl a cast of unforgettable characters, including Arbella Stuart, James's ambitious and lonely first cousin; his childish, spoiled rival for power, Sir Walter Raleigh, who plotted to overthrow the king; and Sir John Harrington, Elizabeth's wily godson, who switched his loyalties to James long before the queen's death. Courtesy of Leanda de Lisle's keenly modern view of this tumultuous time, we are given intimate insights into of political power plays and psychological portraits relevant to our own era. After Elizabeth is a unique look at a pivotal year "and a dazzling debut for an exciting new historian. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

It's a bit hard to follow if you don't already know who the main actors were in this political play and convoluted even if you do, but that's history. De Lisle does a very good job of weighing the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods and finding the stronger and weaker points in both, especially in relation to one another. This book is unique because, as opposed to other books on Elizabeth or any given monarch, they are 500-plus page behemoths, and this one tackles an important issue that is usually overlooked because Elizabeth's reign was long and famous. The transition between the Tudor and the Stuart house is very revealing of the times and conditions in the early 17th century, economically, politically and socially. Throw in the plague and this almost reads like fiction. The last page is a concise evaluation of the subjective injustices of history and it sums up what went wrong with James's reign and how most of it was not even his fault.

Very difficult to follow and to finish. I love Tudor history and have read many books on it (those by Alison Weir are my favorite). This author, however, is frustrating to me, as she jumps forwards and backwards in history, referring repeatedly to things that she hasn't yet described in the book (such as the Gunpowder Plot). I don't feel she is as disciplined a writer of history as Weir. Perhaps it is an unfair comparison, this being de Lisle's first such book, but I found it very difficult to follow and to finish.

This book is all over the place. Where was her editor? It is a very dry read, the inter-lapping chapters of James and Elizabeth just fuel confusion for the reader. I don't think this was thoroughly researched, rather she interjects personal opinions where the facts should be. Someone says that it reads like a textbook, and it does, and a bad one at that. Leanda, you got this one very wrong.

AFTER ELIZABETH fills a gap in other royal biographies, focussing on the death of Queen Elizabeth I and the accession of King James VI to the throne of England as James I. Leanda de Lisle cleverly weaves in earlier history of Q.E. and covers James's arrival from Scotland in more detail than other biographers do. Her writing is lively as she documents the transition that was amazingly smooth, considering that Q.E. would not publicly name her successor and indeed, it was treason to discuss the matter. It's a terrific story well-told with many little-known details. Jinny Webber, author of THE SECRET PLAYER

Few Americans know the story of the succession of James I to the English throne. The London court was left in limbo after the death of Queen Elizabeth, the virgin queen, who died childless without designating her heir to the throne. James, who was reigning as the King of Scotland, was the closest royal blood relative, his mother being the tragic Mary Queen of Scots, Elizabeth's cousin who was a real threat to Elizabeth. The Catholic minority in England rallied around Mary, one-time queen consort of France, to the extent that Elizabeth finally signed the death warrant to send her cousin to the block. James had not been raised by his mother but by the Protestant element in Scotland, thus making him acceptable to the Protestant majority in England. James was not the only candidate for the English throne, but his supporters managed to move quickly at Elizabeth's death and secure his ascendancy before the other parties got into motion. I found this story to be fascinating, filling in the gap between the illustrious reign of Elizabeth I and the tragic story of James I's son, Charles I and the Oliver Cromwell protectorate. It doesn't sparkle, probably due to the rather lackluster personality of this king, but the story moves right along without being tedious. Present-day Americans have heard of James I as the sponsorer of the classic King James translation of the English Bible.

The transition from Queen Elizabeth the first to James of Scotland was a difficult one. At first, it was not clear (who?) and there were other "contenders". There were many people scheming in the background. What a cast of characters - can I say soap opera? It does not get any more thrilling than

this! Leanda de Lisle's book cuts to the chase and delves into the complexity of this time in history. Her writing style is easy to read and understand. This book is one of the best on this subject and it has nice color illustrations divided into two sections. A great read.

Literally ! Much is written as quotes, from the manuscripts and books listed in the footnotes. So unless you're accustomed to the vernacular, you'll find it a difficult read. But historically found it very illuminating as to the character of Mary, Queen of Scots, and her son, James the first of England, Scotland and France.

This book is an excellent summary of a relatively little known era. Reading it is easy, fun, and fascinating, but it is very helpful to have some background in this period of English history and the reigns of the previous monarchs.

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